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gratifying to find a writer who is frank or intelligent enough to admit that no arbitrary standard in regard to overcrowding is possible which is determined by the number of people living on a given area of land. He also shows clearly the absurdity of some of the arbitrary standards of room over-crowding based on cubic air space per person; but while he urges the importance of frequency of air renewal and of the source of air supply, he does not indicate the equally important significance in determining over-crowding of such factors as facilities for maintaining cleanliness and removing wastes.

The author believes that "housing evils in America are not to be remedied by having the government embark upon the experiment of the municipal ownership and operation of tenement houses. The solution of the question is to be found in the right and the duty of the state to say to private individuals: 'You shall not be permitted to build a house in which people ought not to live; you shall not be permitted to so mismanage your house that it is unhealthful or dangerous for people to live in.'" Proceeding on this theory the author describes the essential principles of a housing law and the methods by which it may be enforced. Here he draws largely from his own experience in indicating practical details. In the chapter on "How to Secure Legislative Reforms" he sounds several notes of warning. Legislative enactment he considers a method superior to municipal ordinance. Ways of securing public interest and promoting public intelligence are described and the danger from undue zeal is indicated. He summarizes: "Legislative reforms are to be accomplished only by patient, skilled, well-directed effort. They are not achieved by accident, inspiration, or enthusiasm." The "practical politician" may grant that the author is right in justifying the use of "influence," of strategy, of making recommendations in such form as to allow for necessary compromise; the theorist must regret the implication that indirect methods are ever justifiable in securing results whose purpose is to serve the public welfare. The method may succeed at first, but the secret is soon discovered and the confidence of all whose interest is necessary is hard to secure a second time. It is not at all beyond the realm of proven fact that a well-considered measure of public interest is occasionally at least considered squarely on its merits in legislative assemblies or by the press or the public.

A chapter on "The Field of Private Effort" is suggestive and practical and leads logically to "A Chapter of Don'ts." Sample schedules for housing investigations close the book. The work, together with its companion volume, *A Model Tenement House Law*, will contribute largely to the progress of a movement which needs just such intelligent and practical leadership.

MARION TALBOT

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Economic Heresies. By SIR NATHANIEL NATHAN. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909. 8vo, pp. ix+423. \$3.00 net.

Sir Nathaniel Nathan originally intended to entitle his book "Things as They Are," but as this title had been pre-empted by another author, the present somewhat unattractive title was chosen. The reader can readily infer from these facts the author's critical point of view. To write of things as they are

is a heresy in economics, the science of things as they are not. It is natural to inquire how well qualified our author is to pass judgment upon economics, as a science. From the internal evidence afforded by the book, one may safely conclude that Sir Nathaniel's systematic reading of economics stopped with John Stuart Mill and Bagehot. He has, indeed, skimmed through some later works, such as George's *Progress and Poverty*, Bernard Shaw's *Common Sense of Municipal Trading*. Upton Sinclair's *Industrial Republic* and H. G. Wells's *New Worlds for Old*. As a fair offset, he has forgotten a large proportion of the teachings of Mill and his predecessors. The rank and file of professional economists of latter days have not interfered with the free development of his own views; if these economists are ever present in his thoughts, it is in the guise of "theorists," "pedants," "ancient venerable professors."

For the constructive part of his work, Sir Nathaniel Nathan prepared himself, not by poring over moldy records and tedious statistical exhibits, but by traveling far and observing much. It may be said that there are few industrial processes upon which he has not turned a perspicacious monocle. (Compare his contributions to the mythology of ginseng and glucose, pp. 86-88).

The book is formless, illogical, inaccurate. It contains, nevertheless, many clever suggestions, of which the author has not been able to make anything. Written two hundred years ago, it would have been a mine of ideas for later economists. That books of this character still appear is evidence that economics, in the opinion of the publishers, at least, is a branch, not of science, nor even of philosophy, but of *belles lettres*. For the scientific treatise based upon the Ptolemaic system, or the philosophic treatise contemporary in thought with Duns Scotus or St. Thomas Aquinas remains an unsalable manuscript on the author's hands. The votary of *belles lettres* alone is equally at home in any age. A Jack London may hark back to the Age of Stone; a D'Annunzio may strive with Aeschylus for the glory of chronicling the doom of the House of Atreus. And so, it appears, a writer of today may enter into competition with Petty and Davenant and Gee for the title of forerunner of political economy.

ALVIN S. JOHNSON

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

An Attack on Marx's "Capital": A Theory of Technical Rent. By B. TROPHIMOW. Tula, Russia: B. Trophimow, 1910. 8vo, pp. 292. 2 rubles.

This is an untranslated Russian work, of which the title may be rendered as above.

The book is divided into two parts: the author first establishes his technical rent theory and then applies it to his attack on Marxism. Mr. Trophimow bases his theory upon the fact that the same article is produced in different plants at a different cost, till the price is so high as to make it impossible for some producers to sell it. The marginal plant is classified by the author as standing on the technical rent line. Profits or technical rent in each case will be equal to the difference between actual cost and cost in plants on the technical rent line, where this rent tends to be zero. The source of technical rent is exclusively the technical or entrepreneur's ability of the producer. Profits arise